Up Washington's Ladder

Critics Say LBJ's Stress on Career Men For Top Jobs Stifles Needed New Ideas

WASHINGTON - In the comparatively ', rochial writings of the three Washington columnists who cover civil service news, President Johnson is approaching sainthood. No other Chief Executive, they jubilate, ever e evated so many career Government workers to high Federal office.

But to a growing number of skeptics in and out of Government, this unquestioned fact is also an undoubted failing. These peops see Mr. Johnson choking to an underneurishing trickle the constantly needed infusion of new ideas and new talent from the outside world-from business and labor, the universities and foundations, the professions.

How to analyze the Johnson job-filling pattern depends, for one thing, on how deeply and broadly one digs-simply into the top layer of posts in the operating agencies, or down to the lower-echelon jobs and out to e advisory groups. A lot depends, too, on how to define career worker; many of the men and women Mr. Johnson is pushing along have been in Government exclusively their adult lives, while others served in earlier Democratic Administrations, dropped out during the Eisenhower years, then came back in the early Kennedy days and have remained. The critics of the President's personnel policies have in mind largely the top operating jobs, and lump together in their complaints both the in-and-out careerist and the steadfast public servant.

There is no question about Mr. Johnson's inclinations. "If this Administration has any bits in its promotional policies, it is a bias in favor of the career service," he declared last week at a White House rose garden ceremony in honor of an award-winning group of civil servants.

The batch of appointments announced at his most recent press conference in late April is typical. Of eight high-ranking jobs, seven involved promoting or shuffling into other agencies men already long on the Federal payroll. The new Federal Aviation Agency administrator, retired General Wilm McKee, had 35 uninterrupted years of military and civilian service; three othersnely Civil Aeronautics Board Chairman Charles Murphy, new Under Secretary Wilbur Copen of the Department of Health, Educai, and Welfare and new State Department legal adviser Leonard Meeker-had steady or on-and-off service adding up to 72 years; another had been in Federal jobs since 1949, another since 1959, another since February 1941. Only the appointment of Donald Turner to head the Justice Department's Antitrust Division brought in a new man from the academic world outside Washington.

President's Own Career

The President often speaks of himself as a

tary in 1931. Many of the people he's promoting now he has known and dealt with repeatedly during his own climb up the Wash's ington ladder.

Faced with a job to fill, his initial personal predilection is to reach for a big namea Frederic Donner of General Motors to sit on the board of the Communications Satellite Corp., a Mary Bunting of Radeliffe to serve on the Atomic Energy Commission. Frequently, however, big names are too deeply committed to their present jobs, or for other reasons turn him down. Then his usual tendency is to fall back on someone he's known and worked with in the Govern-

Significantly, the President's personal tendencies are amply reinforced by the bent of his chief talent scout, the able chairman of the Civil Service Commission, John W. Macy, Jr. Mr. Macy's eye searches for talent. everywhere-he has an elaborate computer punch card file of names that meet the President's demand for highly educated, tireless. and dedicated men and women-but undoubtedly his eye turns most readily toward the career servants.

The President and Mr. Macy enjoy important support for their bias toward promoting into high jobs career people or people with lengthy, if interrupted, Government service. These people know how the agency works, why this particular program was set up this way. They are devoted to their agency's policies. They know how to operate within the Federal system-whom to telephone in the White House, the way to get things done in interagency committees, how to coax legistation through Congress. The President, so largely a Congressional product himself, seems particularly impressed with this last talent; ability to get along on Capitol Hill seems to have been a major factor in the selections of Henry Fowler as Secretary of the Treasury, Nicholas Katzenbach as Attorney General, Admiral William Raborn to head the Central Intelligence Agency.

Recently enacted increases in top pay scales and liberal retirement benefits will certainly help attract and hold talented civil servants. But the President and Mr. Macy argue-with considerable justice-that the devoted members of the career service must also constantly be encouraged by evidence that their colleagues are being promoted to higher jobs. "The surest way to have the whole system go to not." declares one advogate of the Johnson-Macy method, "is to let the career official think that he can only go so high, that all the top jobs will go to people brought in from the outside.'

President Johnson did inherit from predecessor Kennedy a highly talented top team that included a large number brought in

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